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Michigan Honey Bee Colony Inventory

Honey bee colonies in Michigan as of January 1, 2016 totaled 25,000 according to Marlo Johnson, Director of the USDA, NASS, Great Lakes Regional Field Office.[1] This is 52 percent above the 16,500 colonies on January 1, 2015. During 2015, honey bee colonies on April 1, July 1, and October 1 were 58,000, 89,000, and 67,000, respectively.[1]

Honey bee colonies lost for operations in Michigan during the quarter of January-March 2016 was 5,000 colonies, or 14 percent lost. This quarter showed the least amount of lost honey bee colonies. The quarter of January-March 2015 had a loss of 11,500 colonies or 19 percent, the highest honey bee colonies loss of the five quarters.

Honey bee colonies added for Michigan operations during the quarter of January-March 2016 was 2,300 colonies. The quarter of April-June 2015 added 13,500 colonies, the highest number of honey bee colonies added of the five quarters. The quarter of October-December 2015, at 210, showed the fewest number of honey bee colonies added.

Varroa mites were the primary stressor for operations with five or more colonies during four of the past five quarters. The quarter of July-September 2015 showed the highest percentage of varroa mites at 44.6 percent of colonies affected, while the quarter of January-March 2016 showed varroa mites at only 5.4 percent.

Nationally, honey bee colonies for operations with five or more colonies as of January 1, 2016 totaled 2.59 million. This is 8 percent below the 2.82 million colonies on January 1, 2015. During 2015, honey bee colonies on April 1, July 1, and October 1 were 2.85 million, 3.13 million, and 2.87 million, respectively. Honey bee colonies lost for operations with five or more colonies was highest during the quarter of January-March 2015 and lowest during the quarter of April-June 2015.

Nationally, colonies lost with Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) symptoms peaked at 114 thousand colonies lost during January-March 2016. That same quarter a year ago showed 92.3 thousand colonies lost in the United States. Colonies with CCD loss were those that met all of the following criteria: 1) Little to no build-up of dead bees in the hive or at the hive entrance 2) Rapid loss of adult honey bee population despite the presence of queen, capped brood, and food reserves 3) Absence or delayed robbing of the food reserves 4) Loss not attributable to varroa or nosema loads.

[1]Includes operations with five or more colonies

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